

FLIGHT

&
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EDITORIAL COMMENT.

THE announcement of the changes to take effect in the higher ranks of the R.F.C., which was made last Saturday by the Secretary of State for War, will scarcely have taken by surprise any who have followed with close attention the trend of events in the flying services. The effect of the announcement is that General Henderson vacates the post of Director-General of Military Aeronautics and is succeeded by Major-General J. M. Salmond, while Major-General Brancker, hitherto Deputy-Director of Military Aeronautics, has been "appointed to a command abroad," his present post being in the meantime left unfilled.

The Changes in the R.F.C.

There need not be any misunderstanding as to the meaning of the changes, which are simply a part of the scheme of reorganisation of the whole of our aerial services which has been impending for some time past. General Henderson goes to undertake special work, the carrying out of which will occupy his whole attention, and which has thus made it essential that another chief of the Military Wing should be appointed. What that special work is cannot, for very obvious reasons, be discussed here and

now, though it is perhaps permissible to say that his exceedingly valuable experience will not be lost to military aviation. The R.F.C. has lost an able and devoted chief, but it can lay this consolation to its soul corporate that he will quite possibly be able in his "special work" to labour as devotedly for military aviation in the future as he unquestionably has in the past.

It was seven years ago, when he was 48 years of age, and on sick leave, that General Henderson first identified himself actively with flying. At his own expense he took a course of training in flying at one of the private schools on Salisbury Plain and rapidly qualified as a pilot, his R.Ae.C. certificate being numbered 118. That was in the days when the War Office looked askance at the new thing and would have none of it, except so much as was absolutely forced upon it, and it was a great deal to the good at that time that an officer with so distinguished a record as he already held should have associated himself prominently with the new science. Two years later, in 1912, he went to the War Office as Director of Military Training, and was very closely identified with the Military Aeroplane Trials on Salisbury Plain. In 1913 he was appointed to the post he has just vacated, and it was due almost entirely to his energy and foresight that, when the present war broke out, the all too few squadrons of the R.F.C. were in the highest possible state of readiness for war. But the work he was able to achieve for the Air Service before the war, valuable indeed as it was, has been dwarfed into insignificance by what has been accomplished under his direction in the three years of actual hostilities. From the three or four squadrons which were all we had to accompany the first Expeditionary Force of glorious memory, the R.F.C. has expanded to a size which, although we cannot give definite figures, is quite comparable to the growth of every other arm of the service. As a matter of fact, it will probably be found when at last figures can be quoted that the growth of the Flying Service has been even greater than that of the other arms. Thus from a mere nucleus, hopelessly inferior in all but the gallantry and skill of its personnel to the aerial forces at the disposal of the enemy, General Henderson has evolved a great and glorious Service which is at last decisively superior to that of the Germans, not only in the quality of its personnel, but in the numbers and types of the machines which form its squadrons. Whatever good work and achievement may lie before Sir David Henderson in the future, it will remain for history to record that it was he who really created